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SPONS AGENCY	Partnership for Family Involvement in Education (ED), Washington, DC.
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ABSTRACT

Children do better academically if fathers are involved, regardless if the father lives with his child. This kit was developed for educators and other professionals who are working to increase family involvement in education. The kit outlines strategies for involving fathers in children's learning at home, at school, and in the community. The kit includes speaker notes and accompanying overhead transparencies, a list of publications on family involvement, a video clip from the 1999 broadcast "Fathers Matter!" and a discussion guide for viewing the full broadcast. The overhead transparencies cover research on father involvement, public opinion on father involvement, and strategies for fathers to get involved and for schools to encourage such involvement. The videotape presents excerpts from the "Fathers Matter!" broadcast, and includes student thoughts on parent involvement, responses to phone inquiries from the public given by a panel of fathers and others encouraging male participation, a description of the Illinois Fatherhood Initiative, and other strategies for involvement. The materials are useful to preservice/inservice training and professional development coordinators and are meant to generate discussion on father's involvement in children's learning and family involvement in education. (HTH)

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ED 442 580

FATHERS MATTER!
INVOLVING FATHERS IN CHILDREN'S LEARNING

A KIT FOR EDUCATORS AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS

This document was prepared by the Los Angeles County Office of Education under contract ED-99-PO-3028 to the U.S. Department of Education.

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Richard W. Riley
U.S. Secretary of Education

G. Mario Moreno
Assistant Secretary
Office of Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs

W. Wilson Goode
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Office of Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs

March 2000

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U.S. Department of Education
Partnership for Family Involvement in Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202-8173

http://pfie.ed.gov
E-mail: partner@ed.gov
Telephone: 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327)
FIRS: 1-800-877-8339, 8 a.m.–8 p.m., ET, Monday–Friday

A Discussion Guide for Viewing the Broadcast:

Fathers Matter!
Involving Fathers in Children's Learning

This document was prepared by Westat under contract ED-00-PO-1528 to the U.S. Department of Education

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PS 028674

Richard W. Riley
U.S. Secretary of Education

Terry K. Peterson
Counselor to the Secretary

G. Mario Moreno
Assistant Secretary
Office of Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs

W. Wilson Goode
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Office of Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs

June 2000

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Fathers Matter!

Panel 1

Strengthening Participation of Fathers in Children's Learning and Development

U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley and U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala are the hosts of the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education Teleconference on Fathers. In their opening remarks, they focus on two major themes: 1) fathers matter and 2) schools and other child-centered institutions can and must involve fathers in their children's learning and development.

Fathers Matter

Parents are their children's first teachers. The way children are nurtured during their first years of life has enormous impact on the rest of their lives. For many years, mothers have tended to be the ones who nurtured children and communicated with schools. In the popular imagination, then, schools are considered "feminine" places. The time is ripe for challenging this view.

Research tells us that *both* parents are needed to nurture a child and get her or him ready to begin school. Once they enter school, children whose fathers and mothers are involved generally perform better and have fewer behavior problems. Whether parents live together or apart, it is important that both are involved. Good fathers are as important as good mothers to children's healthy development.

Child-Centered Institutions Must Engage Fathers

In order for fathers to become true partners in their children's education, schools, Head Start programs, childcare centers and other child-centered institutions must overcome some obstacles and make some changes regarding their involvement of fathers. They must:

- Be more welcoming.
- Involve fathers on an ongoing basis. In the past, mothers' involvement in their children's education was expected, while father's involvement was not. It is important, then, to change these norms or expectations.
- Understand the family living situations of children in their classrooms. For example, not all children know or have relationships with their natural fathers. Being aware of such circumstances enables caregivers and teachers to identify an appropriate father figure or role model in each child's life.

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- Understand that many men are shy about becoming involved. They are not sure what their role is. This is especially true for fathers who do not live with their children. It will take special effort and time to ensure their involvement.

- Help fathers and father figures define roles for themselves in their children's learning and development. Fathers will be motivated to continue when they feel their participation is important or meaningful.

- Coach both parents in child development. Encourage fathers to ask questions of teachers and developmental specialists.

- Include fathers in all communications. When meeting with both parents of a child, do not relegate the father to the role of observer of your conversation with the mother. Non-resident fathers should receive copies of school calendars and student progress reports, as well as invitations to parent/teacher conferences and other special events.

- Be flexible—fathers may come in at different times than mothers or participate in different ways.

Initiatives to Strengthen Fathers' Involvement

As a follow up to this teleconference, the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services are developing and disseminating toolkits and other materials to help teachers and other providers in their efforts to engage fathers in their children's learning and development. Call toll free 1-800-USA-LEARN to request materials on "Fathers Matter!"

Panel 2

Strategies for Engaging Fathers in Children's Learning

The second panel of experts discussed strategies for engaging fathers in their children's learning and development and suggested areas in need of further research.

Strategies to Engage Fathers

Many fathers would like to play more active roles in their children's schooling, but do not feel comfortable or, sometimes, even welcome. Schools have always expected more from mothers—and gotten it. Lack of fathers' involvement reflects, in part, the low expectations for their involvement in children's education. As a result, some fathers think schools are the domain of mothers and mother figures. They cannot imagine roles for fathers in children's learning. Often fathers have little or no access to information about school activities or their children's progress. Although more knowledge is needed about the factors determining fathers' involvement or lack of it, schools can take certain steps to help fathers feel welcome.

Panelists suggest several steps that schools and other service providers can take to remove barriers and engage more fathers in their children's learning and development. These steps include doing community outreach, creating activities that are comfortable or appealing to fathers, keeping fathers informed, and supporting employers who give parents time off work to participate in school activities.

Go to Fathers in the Community

In the minds of many Americans, "family involvement" translates into "mother participation." Historically, mothers have been more actively involved in their children's schools. To reach fathers, teachers and other practitioners may need to go into communities and meet fathers in their own space. In addition to engaging fathers, this type of outreach also helps teachers better understand the lives of their students.

Create New Activities

Activities that are comfortable for mothers may not be comfortable for fathers. A major goal, then, is to find activities that will attract fathers and father figures to schools. Many may find athletics and outdoor education more comfortable and enticing than tutorial classroom activities. Once comfortable, fathers can be encouraged to communicate with their children's teachers more regularly, or to take more interest in their children's homework.

Keep Fathers Informed

School calendars, report cards, parent-teacher conference materials, and other pertinent information should be sent to mothers and fathers. This includes non-custodial fathers, as well as stepfathers, grandfathers and other father figures. In order to reach the appropriate father or father figure, teachers and schools must familiarize themselves with every student's family living situation.

Recognize Employers with Flexible Family Leave Policies

Many school activities occur while fathers are at work. Schools can enlist the support of local employers to encourage their employees to become involved in their children's schooling. Employers who provide parents with some flexibility in their work schedules so they can participate in activities at their children's schools should be recognized publicly for their commitment to children's education. Other local employers should be encouraged to adopt these policies.

Future Research

Research is needed to further understand how fathers contribute to children's development. Also, teachers and other practitioners should identify their information needs and shape the research agenda. Research should yield results that are useful to teachers and other practitioners. Panelists suggest a number of topics in need of further investigation, including:

- Differences in level or type of father involvement, by culture, language, parent education, income, family type and other characteristics;
- Characteristics of communities and schools where fathers are actively involved in their children's learning and development;
- Ways to strengthen school-community relationships to reach more fathers;
- Special needs of teenage fathers and their children;
- Culture-specific needs of fathers and children who live on reservations; and
- Special needs of incarcerated fathers and their children.

Panel 3

Reaching Out to Fathers: Success Stories

This panel of program specialists discusses strategies they have used to connect with fathers and involve fathers in their children's education. Panelists represented diverse programs and community-based organizations, including Head Start; a public elementary school; the Center for Father, Families and Workforce Development; and the National Latino Fatherhood and Family Institute.

Revamping Programs to Include Men

Traditionally, early childhood education programs and schools have been oriented toward mothers and mother figures. If increasing fathers' involvement is important, then there is a need to expand these programs to include men.

Head Start and Healthy Start are two federally funded programs that place strong emphasis on parent participation. For many years, however, parent involvement was synonymous with mother's participation. To involve fathers, program leaders learned, it was important to rethink their programs. One of the more important realizations was how few men were employed as staff in their programs—particularly in jobs that involved direct contact with parents and children. Another was that they needed to find ways to help fathers form social bonds with other fathers in the program. They hired male social workers and classroom aides. They also conducted weekend retreats so men could develop the sort of bonds with one another that would support ongoing involvement in their children's school programs. They provided men with workshops on diverse subjects, ranging from nutrition and parenting to literacy and computer skills. Over the years, interest in these special programs has grown.

Reaching Out to the Community

Organizers of successful family involvement efforts understand that many fathers are not likely to volunteer on their own. It is important for teachers and other family service providers to go into the community, talk to men about their children and lives, and invite them to visit the program or school as a first step toward building an effective program of fathers' involvement in children's learning.

Community outreach programs also challenge teachers and other family service providers to question stereotypical images of fathers as deadbeats. Many men who do not attend meetings or volunteer at their children's schools are in fact involved in their children's lives. Programs that do not acknowledge this, or minimize it, inadvertently alienate the very men they are trying to attract.

Being Flexible

There are many ways parents can participate in their children's learning and development. Successful school and community-based programs give the parents room to acquire parenting skills and opportunities to select activities that are meaningful to them. For example, the Watch Dog program in Springdale, Arkansas was started by fathers who were concerned about their children's safety at school. Over time, however, the fathers became aware of other roles they could play in the school, including mentoring and tutoring the students. The Watch Dog program also gives public recognition to local employers and businesses that give fathers time off to participate in the program.

Addressing the Needs of Both Fathers and Children

Some fathers encounter barriers to participation. Those with poor reading skills may shy away from activities or events at their children's schools. The Respect and Read program in Los Angeles helps men respect themselves and others through discussion and involvement in community change activities. Men are encouraged to read—on their own and with children. Fathers who cannot read are assigned to preschools where they can serve as role models and, at the same time, improve their skills. This program has resulted in stronger bonds between fathers and children. Also, participation has motivated some fathers to go back to school, sending strong signals to children that education is important.

Research shows that parents of teenage fathers are often not sufficiently involved in their children's education. Like their children, then, these young men need input and guidance from mentors or father figures. Around the country, programs nurture and guide teenage fathers so they can, in turn, nurture and guide their own children.

Developing Replicable Programs

Programs that attribute their success to the unique character, talents or commitment of a particular individual cannot be replicated. Programs should be well designed and based on a few simple principles that can be used in any community.

Panel 4

Forming Community Partnerships

The fourth panel discusses the importance of forming partnerships in the community to better engage fathers in their children's learning. The panelists talk more generally about core principles or practices that have contributed to the success of their programs.

Examples of Useful Partnerships

Local businesses and employers, colleges and universities, faith-based groups and other organizations are important partners in the effort to engage fathers.

Panelists provide several examples of successful partnerships between schools and organizations and local businesses and employers. For example, the Illinois Fatherhood Initiative has garnered support from more than a dozen businesses, including major department stores and auto dealers, as well as a major newspaper, a radio station and a baseball franchise. In this and other programs, employers and business owners provide cash and in-kind support. Also, through family-friendly policies, employers or businesses can send the message to employees that involvement in their children's education is important. Businesses benefit from their partnerships with schools, for example, through the recognition they receive in the community and through the contribution they make to the development of tomorrow's workforce.

Colleges and universities can help in a number of important ways. In their professional training courses, they can develop the attitudes, motivation and skills that will enable teachers, social workers and others to effectively engage parents. Also, they can challenge stereotypes that are obstacles to fathers' involvement, such as mothers having primary responsibility for children's education and development and fathers not needing to be involved.

In Hartford, Connecticut, the Family Resource Center has partnered with a local university to provide workshops for parents on nutrition, child development, discipline and other topics. These workshops, which lay the groundwork for parents' participation, are combined with "bring your dad to school" days and other activities that get the fathers involved. In addition, the Center connects parents to programs and services that can help them, for example, get their GEDs, learn English and acquire job skills.

Elements of Success

In addition to their comments on partnerships, members of the panel talked more generally about core principles or practices that have contributed to the success of their programs. These include respect for diversity, community awareness and building upon strengths.

Respect for Diversity

It is important that teachers and school administrators understand the background of students and parents at their schools, including cultural norms about the roles and responsibilities of fathers in their families. Certain strategies may be effective with some cultural groups, but not with others. Efforts by schools to engage fathers in their children's learning must be aware of these differences and find ways to address them effectively.

Community Awareness

To recruit fathers and mothers, it is important to raise community awareness about the important roles that parents play in their children's education and development.

In Las Vegas, Nevada, the county education association has formed a bureau of speakers who go out into the community to raise awareness about the positive outcomes for children when both parents are involved in their education. Because it is a grassroots effort, speakers can talk to parents—fathers and mothers—about the various ways they can become involved and waylay any concerns they may have.

Building on Strengths

There are many ways that schools can build on strengths and engage fathers. An elementary school in Washington, D.C., for example, has formed a fathers' group that provides a mechanism by which men may become involved, and demonstrates that there is strength in numbers. Periodic retreats provide the fathers with opportunities to bond with their sons and with one another. Also, the school lets fathers contribute in ways that are comfortable to them. One father, for example, painted a classroom. Another, a short-order cook, grills hamburgers and hot dogs at the PTA's fair every spring. Once schools initiate efforts to invite fathers into children's learning, they can further extend these programs by regarding fathers and father figures as full partners in their children's academic success.

Publications from the U.S. Department of Education

Promoting Family Involvement

Information and publications on promoting family involvement can be found on the Partnership for Family Involvement's Web site at http://pfie.ed.gov

- *A Business Guide to Support Employee and Family Involvement in Education* (from the Conference Board, 1997)
- *A Compact for Learning: An Action Handbook for Family-School-Community Partnerships*
- *America Goes Back to School: Partners' Activity Kit 2000, 1999, 1998, 1997, 1996, 1995*
- *An Invitation to Your Community: Building Community Partnerships for Learning*
- *Building Business and Community Partnerships for Learning*
- *Community Update* (newsletter)
- *A New Understanding of Parent Involvement*
- *Employers, Families and Education*
- *Fathers' Involvement in Their Children's Schools*
- *Fathers' Involvement in Children's Education: Successful Local Approaches*

After-School

Information on after-school programs can be found by visiting www.ed.gov/pubs/edpubs.html

Or call 1-877-4ED-PUBS to order publications

- *Working for Children and Families: Safe and Smart After-School Programs*
- *Keeping Schools Open as Community Learning Centers*
- *Give Us Wings, Let Us Fly*

Reading

Information on literacy can be found on the Department of Education's America Reads Challenge Web site at www.ed.gov/americareads

All America Reads Challenge publications can be ordered at 1-877-4ED-PUBS and found at www.ed.gov/americareads/resources.html

- *The Read*Write*Now Activity Poster* (English and Spanish)
- *A Compact for Reading Guide*
- *The America Reads Challenge Resource Kit: Information on How to Implement and Maintain a Community Literacy Program* (Web site only)
- *Start Early, Finish Strong: How to Help Every Child Become a Reader* (Web site only)
- *Ideas at Work: How to Help Every Child Become a Reader*
- *The Read*Write*Now! Basic Kit!* (Web site only)
- *The Ready*Set*Read Activity Guides for Families and Caregivers* (English and Spanish: Web site only)

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- *So That Every Child Can Read . . . America Reads Community Tutoring Partnerships* (Web site only)
- *Read with Me: A Guide for Student Volunteers Starting Early Childhood Literacy Programs*
- *Checkpoints for Progress: In Reading and Writing for Families and Communities*
- *Checkpoints for Progress: In Reading and Writing for Teachers and Learning Partners*
- *Simple Things You Can Do to Help All Children Read Well and Independently by the End of Third Grade* (Web site only)
- *Learning to Read/Reading to Learn Information Kit* (Web site only)
- *On the Road to Reading: A Guide for Community Partners* (Web site only)
- *Reading Helpers: A Guide for Training Tutors* (Web site only)
- *Helping your Child Become a Reader* (Call 1-800-878-3256)
- *We Want You Posters and Brochures* (material to be used to recruit literacy volunteers)

Mathematics

Information and publications on math are available on the Department of Education's Web site at www.ed.gov/americacounts

- *Overview*
- *Special Initiatives: Mathematics Mentoring and Tutoring*
- *Tutoring Roadmap*
- *Yes, You Can! Establishing Mentoring Programs to Prepare Youth for College*
- *Resources and Opportunities for Establishing High-Quality Mathematics Tutoring Programs*
- *E-MATH: A Guide to E-mail Based Volunteer Programs Designed to Help Students Master Challenging Mathematics, Science and Technology*
- *Mathematics Equals Opportunity*
- *Improving Mathematics in Middle Schools: Lessons from TIMSS and Related Research*
- *Formula for Success: A Business Leader's Guide to Supporting Math and Science Achievement*
- *Self-Assessment Guide for Improving Mathematics: Using Federal Resources for Improving Mathematics Teaching and Learning*

Preparing for College

Information and publications on preparing for college early can be found on the Department of Education's Web site at www.ed.gov/thinkcollege/

- *Getting Ready for College Early*
- *Preparing Your Child for College*
- *Think College? Me? Now?*
- *Funding Your Education 2000/2001*
- *2000/2001 Student Guide*
- *Yes, You Can! Establishing Mentoring Programs to Prepare Youth for College*

Teacher Quality

Visit the Department of Education's Web site at
www.ed.gov/inits/teachers/teach.html
for information and publications on teacher quality

- *A Talented, Dedicated, and Well-Prepared Teacher in Every Classroom: U.S. Department of Education Initiatives on Teaching Information Kit*
- *Promising Practices: New Ways to Improve Teacher Quality*
- *Building Bridges: The Mission and Principles of Professional Development*
- *What to Expect Your First Year of Teaching*
- *Teacher Quality: A Report on the Preparation and Qualifications of Public School Teachers*
- *The Challenge for America: A High Quality Teacher in Every Classroom*
- *Trying to Beat the Clock: Uses of Teacher Professional Time in Three Countries*

Technology

Information and publications on technology can be found on the Department of Education's Web site at
www.ed.gov/technology/

- *Getting On-line: A Friendly Guide for Teachers, Students and Parents*
- *Parents Guide to the Internet*
- *Getting America's Students Ready for the 21st Century: Meeting the Technology Literacy Challenge*
- *An Educator's Guide to Evaluating the Use of Technology in Schools and Classrooms*

The Arts

Information on the arts is available at the Department of Education's Web site at
www.ed.gov/pubs/ArtsEd/
or the Arts Education Partnership Web site at www.aep-arts.org

- *Transforming Ideas for Teaching and Learning the Arts.* (Visit www.ed.gov/pubs/StateArt/Arts/back.html)
- *Arts Education and School Improvement Resources for State and Local Leaders.* (For information and to obtain an updated copy of the publication, visit www.ed.gov/pubs/ArtsEd/title.html)
- *Good Schools Require the Arts.* (To request a copy of the publication, call the ArtsEducation Partnership at (202)326-8693, send a fax to (202)408-8076 or send an e-mail to aep@ccsso.org)
- *Young children and the Arts: Making Creative Connections.* (To request a copy of this publication, call the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities at (202)682-5409 or send a fax to (202) 682-5668)
- *Gaining the Arts Advantage.* (This is available at www.pcah.gov)

More on next page

Keeping Kids Safe and Drug-Free

Information and publication on keeping kids safe and drug-free can be found on the Department Education's Web site at www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS

- *Manual on School Uniforms*
- *Action Guide: Creating Safe and Drug-Free Schools*
- *Growing Up Drug-Free: A Parent's Guide to Prevention*
- *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools*
- *Preventing Youth Hate Crime*
- *Conflict Resolution Education: A Guide to Implementing Programs in Schools, Youth-Serving Organizations, and Community and Juvenile Justice Settings*
- *Manual to Combat Truancy*

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Using This Kit

The enclosed kit was developed for educators and other professionals who are working to increase family involvement in education. It outlines strategies for involving fathers in children's learning at home, at school, and in the community.

This kit includes speaker notes and overheads, a list of publications on family involvement, and a video clip from the October 28, 1999 broadcast "Fathers Matter!" which was produced by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

These materials are useful to pre-service/in-service training and professional development coordinators and as a "just add water" packet. We encourage each organization to add its own information and examples to the kit and to use any or all of the kit contents as appropriate. The kit itself is meant to be used to kick off a discussion, or a series of discussions, on fathers' involvement in children's learning and family involvement in education.

Please note that the resource organizations listed in this kit have additional programs and materials that support family involvement in education and involving fathers in children's learning. These too may be useful to your efforts.

Resources

American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20001
Phone: 202-393-8635 or 202-879-4400
Fax: 202-393-6371
Web address: www.aft.org

Center for Successful Fathering, Inc.
13740 Research Boulevard
Suite G-4
Austin, TX 78750
Phone: 1-800-537-0853 or 512-335-8106
Fax: 512-258-2591
Web address: www.fathering.org

Families and Work Institute/The Fatherhood Project
330 Seventh Avenue, 14th Floor
New York, NY 10001
Phone: 212-465-2044
Fax: 212-465-8637
Web address: www.igc.org/fatherhood/

Illinois Fatherhood Initiative
P.O. Box 06260
Chicago, IL 60606
Phone: 1-800-996- DADS or 312-648-3062
Fax: 312-648-3344
Web address: www.4fathers.com

Los Angeles County Office of Education
9300 Imperial Highway
Downey, CA 90242-2890
Phone: 562-922-6111
Fax: 562-922-6768
Web address: www.lacoe.edu/

Maryland State Department of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21201-2595
Phone: 410-767-0100
Fax: 410-767-3867
Web address: www.msde.state.md.us/

National Center for Fathering
P.O. Box 413888
Kansas City, MO 64141
Phone: 1-800-593-DADS or 913-384-4661
Fax: 913-384-4665
Web address: www.fathers.com

National Center on Fathers and Families
University of Pennsylvania
Graduate School of Education
3700 Walnut Street, Box 58
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6216
Phone: 215-573-5500
Fax: 215-573-5508
Web address: www.ncoff.gse.upenn.edu/

National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE)
3929 Old Lee Highway, Suite 91-A
Fairfax, VA 22030-2401
Phone: 703-359-8973
Fax: 703-359-0972
Web address: www.ncpie.org

National Education Association (NEA)
1201 16th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036
Phone: 202-822-7155
Fax: 202-822-7997
Web address: www.nea.org

National Fatherhood Initiative
101 Lake Forest Boulevard, Suite 360
Gaithersburg, MD 20877
Phone: 301-948-0599
Fax: 301-948-4325
Web address: www.fatherhood.org/index.html

National PTA
330 N. Wabash Avenue, Suite 2100
Chicago, IL 60611-3690
Phone: 800-307-4PTA (4782) or 312-670-6782
Fax: 312-670-6783
Web address: www.pta.org/index.stm

Partnership for Family Involvement in Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202-8173
Phone: 202-401-0056
Fax: 202-205-9133
Web address: http://pfie.ed.gov

U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202
Phone: 1-800-USA-LEARN
Web address: www.ed.gov

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201
Phone: 1-877-696-6775 or 202-619-0257
Web address: www.hhs.gov
fatherhood.hhs.gov/

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FATHERS MATTER! INVOLVING FATHERS IN CHILDREN'S LEARNING

A KIT FOR EDUCATORS AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS

Talking Points for Overheads

Overhead 1—Cover Slide:

This kit was developed in support of fathers' involvement in children's learning. In October 1999, the nationwide teleconference "Fathers Matter!" was hosted by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It brought national attention to the importance of fathers' involvement in children's learning. Examples of effective practices from across the nation were featured during the broadcast. The program was received by hundreds of downlink sites nationally.

Overhead 2—True or False

1. In two-parent households, if mothers are not involved, their children do not achieve well.

False. Research shows that fathers' involvement is important to children's academic standing at all grade levels. In two-parent families, fathers' involvement, but not mothers' involvement, is associated with an increased likelihood that children in the first through fifth grades get mostly As. Among children in the sixth through 12th grades, after controlling for a variety of resources that parents offer at home, fathers' involvement, but not mothers' involvement, remains a significant influence on the likelihood that children get mostly As. In two-parent families, the involvement of fathers exerts a distinct and independent influence on whether children have ever repeated a grade, get mostly As, enjoy school, and participate in extracurricular activities, even after controlling for mothers' involvement in school. In two-parent families, the proportion of children with highly involved fathers remains fairly constant from elementary school (30%) to middle school (25%) to high school (23%). (See notes for Overhead 8)

Overhead 3—True or False

2. Nonresident fathers involved in their children's schools have little impact on their children's success in school.

False. The involvement of nonresident fathers in their children's schools is particularly important for children in grades 6-12. It reduces the chances that these children will be suspended or expelled from school or repeat a grade. Nonresident fathers' involvement is also associated with a greater likelihood that children in all grades participate in extracurricular activities. There is also evidence that the involvement of nonresident fathers increases the likelihood that children in grades 6 through 12 get mostly As and that they enjoy school. However, of children in contact with their nonresident parents, only 31 percent have fathers who have participated in at least one school activity, and only 9 percent have fathers who are highly involved. (See notes for Overhead 5 for definitions of high and low involvement.)

(Nord, Brimhall & West, 1997)

Overhead 4—True or False

3. Fathers' involvement is as critical to child development in the early years as it is in the later years.

True. Fathers spend less time with their children as their children grow older, in part because children themselves desire to spend more time with peers. However, just the opposite is needed. The older children get the more important their father's involvement is to their development, especially for sons. Some evidence suggests that children and youth rely upon their fathers to provide factual information. Children also tend to believe that, with respect to family goals, the most important one for fathers is that "everyone learn and do well in school." On the other hand, children are more likely to say that mothers think it is more important to make "everyone feel special and important." This suggests mothers' involvement is beneficial for the social and emotional adjustment of children to school, particularly that of young children, but that fathers' involvement may be key to academic achievement throughout a child's schooling.

(Nord, Brimhall & West, 1997)

RESEARCH

Overhead 5—Family Involvement and Student Achievement

Thirty years of research clearly shows that family involvement in education is a "win/win" for both students and schools. In particular student benefits in education are higher grades, better attendance and homework completion, more positive attitudes toward school, higher graduation rates and higher college enrollment rates. Research also shows that strong family-school-community partnerships make a positive difference in student achievement.

School benefits from family involvement are improved teacher morale, higher ratings of teachers by parents, more support from families, and better reputations in the community.
(Henderson & Berla, 1994)

Despite this clear evidence of benefits, efforts to involve families are often weak. Schools and teachers need to develop better ways of working with fathers, as well as with mothers.

(U.S. Department of Education, 1994)

RESEARCH

Overhead 6—Family Involvement and Student Achievement Among Two-Parent Families.

- Compared to students in a two-parent family—whether natural or stepparents—whose parents had low involvement in their schooling, students whose parents were highly involved, either together or singly were

  -more likely to get mostly As,
  -less likely to be suspended or expelled, and
  -less likely to have repeated a grade.

- High involvement by the father or mother can make a positive difference for children's learning across grades K–12. (Nord, Brimhall & West 1997)

- Research shows that 87 percent of students who got mostly As and Bs report that their parents were available to help them with their schoolwork when needed. For students getting worse than C grades, 72 percent said that their parents were available. (Harris 1998)

- High involvement means that one or both parents had done three or all four of these activities during the school year: attended a general school meeting, attended a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference, attended a school or class event, and served as a volunteer at school. Parents were said to have low involvement in their children's schools if they had done none or only one of the four activities. (Nord, Brimhall & West, 1997)

Overhead 7—Single Fathers' Involvement and Student Achievement

These and other findings to be discussed are based on the overall cross tabulations in the study on fathers' involvement (Nord, Brimhall & West, 1997). Controls for other variables sometimes change the strength of these relationships.

- Compared to students in single-parent families whose fathers had a low level of involvement, students with highly involved single fathers were

  -more likely to get As,
  -less likely to be suspended or expelled, and
  -less likely to have to repeat a grade.

- In single-father families

  -32 percent of children in grades K–12 whose fathers were highly involved got mostly As, compared to 17 percent for those whose fathers had low involvement.
  -35 percent of children in grades K–12 whose fathers were not highly involved were suspended or expelled, compared to 11 percent whose fathers were highly involved.
  -18 percent of children in grades K–12 whose fathers were not highly involved repeated a grade, compared to 13 percent of those whose fathers were highly involved.

- 44 percent of children in grades K–12 whose fathers were highly involved enjoyed school, compared to 30 percent of those whose fathers were not highly involved.

(Nord, Brimhall & West, 1997)

RESEARCH

Overhead 8—Non-Resident Fathers' Involvement and Student Achievement

- Compared to students neither of whose parents was involved, students whose non-resident father was highly involved in school activities were

  -more likely to get mostly As,
  -less likely to be suspended or expelled, and
  -less likely to have to repeat a grade.

- Research shows that, for children with non-resident fathers

  -35 percent of those in grades K–12 whose fathers were highly involved got mostly As, compared to 29 percent of those whose fathers were not.
  -28 percent of those in grades K–12 whose fathers were not highly involved were suspended or expelled, compared to 14 percent of those whose fathers were.
  -18 percent of those in grades K–12 whose fathers were not highly involved repeated a grade, compared to 7 percent of those whose fathers were.
  -45 percent of those in grades K–12 whose fathers were highly involved enjoyed school, compared to 35 percent of those whose fathers were not highly involved.

  (Nord, Brimhall & West, 1997)

RESEARCH

Overhead 9—Involvement of Single Fathers in Their Children's Education Across Grade Levels

In general, fathers' involvement in their children's schools decreases as children grow older. Part of the decline may be attributed to a corresponding decline in opportunities at school for parental involvement as children grow older. However, the pattern of decline differs between fathers in two-parent families and those in single-father families. In two-parent families, the proportion of children with highly involved fathers drops from 30 percent to 25 percent between elementary (grades K–5) and middle school (grades 6–8), but then drops only slightly more, to 23 percent, in high school (grades 9–12). Among children living in single-father families, there is no decrease in the proportion who have highly involved fathers between elementary and middle schools (53 percent at both grade levels), but a large decrease between middle and high school (to 27 percent).

These results were based on simple tabulations of the data that do not take into account such factors as the parent's education or mother's employment. For example, single fathers are likely to be more educated than fathers in general and this influences involvement.

(Nord, Brimhall & West, 1997)

OPINION

Overhead 10—What People Say About Fathers

According to a 1992 National Center for Fathering Gallup Poll, 96 percent of those surveyed agreed that fathers need to be more involved in their children's education, by, for example, helping with homework or attending parent-teacher conferences. Furthermore, 54 percent agreed that fathers today spend less time with their children than the respondents' fathers did with them. Only 42 percent agree that most fathers know what is going on in their children's lives.

(National Center for Education Statistics, 1997)

OPINION

Overhead 11—What Students Say About Fathers' and Mothers' Involvement

Students say that fathers' and mothers' involvement is key to their success in school. Research shows that highly involved fathers can be as important to children's success as highly involved mothers. Fathers can have a positive impact on their children's academic achievement whether they live in the residence or outside the residence.

(National Center for Education Statistics, 1997)

OPINION

Overhead 12—What Teachers Say About Fathers' and Mothers' Involvement

According to teachers, the "single most important thing public schools need to help students learn" is involved parents. (Henderson & Berla, 1994)

Educators and schools recognize the importance of fathers' involvement. Ways in which schools can involve fathers include:

-Providing training for fathers and other men, as well as women, to learn how to tutor students in basic subjects;
-Inviting fathers to talk about how their education helped prepare them for their careers; and
-Hosting father-child breakfasts or dinners where fathers can meet teachers and school staff.

Overhead 13—Ways to Improve Family Involvement in Education

***Note to the presenter: Select ideas from each category of this list if time is short.**

- Strategies that strengthen family involvement in education must take into account barriers that confront families, schools, and communities.

- Barriers include lack of time, not knowing what works, differences in language and culture, unsafe neighborhoods, and schools that do not have a family-friendly environment and are not organized to work with families.

- Finding ways to attain the following objectives will help to reduce barriers to family involvement in education. Here are some practices from actual schools as described in the recent *Idea Book* from the U.S. Department of Education.
  (Funkhouser and Gonzalez, 1997)

1. Overcome time and resource constraints.

   -Find time for teachers
   Hire parent coordinators with Title I funds to organize outreach and inform staff of family needs.
   -Provide resources to support school outreach to families
   Use voice mail and information hotlines to make communication more efficient.
   -Help parents overcome time and resource constraints
   Provide early notice, transportation, and child care for parent meetings and send home information to parents who cannot attend.

2. Provide information and training to parents and school staff.

   -Provide training to inform and involve parents
   Support children's learning at home via parent workshops or home visits.
   -Organize a family resource center in school
   Here, parents can read or borrow books on parenting, meet informally with teachers, attend small workshops, and learn of local jobs, services, and programs.

-Provide information and training for school staff

Provide resources on making home visits and positive phone calls, appreciating diversity and family strengths, developing skills for parent-teacher conferences, and helping families become stronger learning environments.

3. Restructure schools to support family involvement.

-Design parent involvement around family needs

Schools can conduct needs assessments through parent surveys, focus groups, town meetings, and neighborhood walks to gather ideas.

-Include parents as partners in school-wide restructuring

Invite parents to be on school decision-making committees, site-based management councils, and planning groups.

-Make known new uses of school space

Use welcome signs and volunteers to guide entering parents, and make good use of parent centers.

-Organize unusual school-family activities

Have parents join teachers on school planning retreats; provide student health and counseling services at school.

4. Bridge school-family differences.

-Reach parents who have little formal education

Call parents about student progress instead of sending written information.

-Break the language barrier

Provide bilingual parent liaisons and parent volunteers, and conduct meetings and send materials home in several languages.

-Promote cultural understanding

Provide home-school liaisons who understand the background of parents so the school can build on the strengths of other cultures.

5. Tap external supports for partnerships.

-Develop school-community partnerships that marshal added resources

Local businesses, agencies and colleges can help provide family services such as educational programs, social services, health care, and transportation to school events.

-Gain district- and state-level support for school-family partnerships

Education agencies can assist with policies, funding, training, and family services. (Funkhouser and Gonzales, 1997)

(U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement,1997)

Overhead 14— How Fathers Can Get Involved With Their Children at Home

Helping children learn at home can increase success in school. Fathers can take steps that make a positive difference academically, such as:

- **Reading with their children**—even older children can enjoy this collaborative activity.

- **Discussing the day's events with their child**—it shows interest and builds knowledge.

- **Working with their child on homework and special projects**—this helps children understand the steps involved and gives them encouragement.

- **Using TV wisely**—limiting viewing to no more than two hours a school day gives children more time for reading, doing homework and having conversations with the family.

- **Establishing a daily routine in the home**—setting a time for homework, chores, and other activities helps children be more productive.

Overhead 15— How Schools Can Involve Fathers

- Include fathers:

  -in parent/teacher conferences
  -in after-school and extracurricular activities
  -in mentoring and tutoring activities

- Schools can keep fathers informed of their children's progress and performance through ongoing contact, including newsletters, conferences, and telephone calls.

Overhead 16— Types of Parent/Family Involvement Practices

How can schools take the lead to promote family involvement in education? One way is to look within the school.

The National PTA Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs are based on six types of parent involvement identified by Joyce Epstein. These are:

- **Communicating**—Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.
- **Parenting**—Parenting skills are promoted and supported.
- **Student Learning**—Parents play an integral role in helping students learn.
- **Volunteering**—Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.
- **School Decision-Making and Advocacy**—Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
- **Collaborating with the Community**—Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.

Use these PTA Standards to evaluate what your school is doing, and to identify areas you would like to strengthen for working with families and especially for working with fathers.

(National PTA, 1997)

Overhead 17— Information on Fathers' Involvement

If you are interested in obtaining more information about family and fathers' involvement, contact the U.S. Department of Education, which has many resources on this topic.

Call **1-800-USA-LEARN**

Or

Visit the following Web sites:

Site address

- http://pfie.ed.gov
  Partnership for Family Involvement in Education

- http://fatherhood.hhs.gov/
  U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Fatherhood Initiative

- http://www.nces.ed.gov/pubs98/fathers/index.html
  ED Pubs, The U.S. Department of Education's site for ordering publications

- http://www.igc.org/fatherhood/
  Families and Work Institute/The Fatherhood Project

- http://www.4fathers.com
  Illinois Fatherhood Initiative

- http://www.fathers.com
  National Center for Fathering

- http:// www.fatherhood.org/index.html
  National Fatherhood Initiative

U.S. Department of Education

ED 028674

Fathers Matter!

Involving Fathers in Children's Learning

A Kit for Educators and Other Professionals

True ☐ False ☐

In two-parent households, if mothers are not involved, their children do not achieve well.

PARTNERSHIP for Family Involvement in Education

True ☐ False ☐

Nonresident fathers involved in their children's schools have little impact on their children's success in school.

True ☐ **False ☐**

Fathers' involvement is as critical to child development in the early years—for example, through reading—as it is in the later years—for example, through sports.

PARTNERSHIP for Family Involvement in Education

RESEARCH

Family Involvement and Student Achievement

The mutual benefits of family involvement

Students gain

- Higher grades
- Better attendance and homework completion
- More positive attitudes
- Higher graduation rates
- Higher college enrollment rates

Schools gain

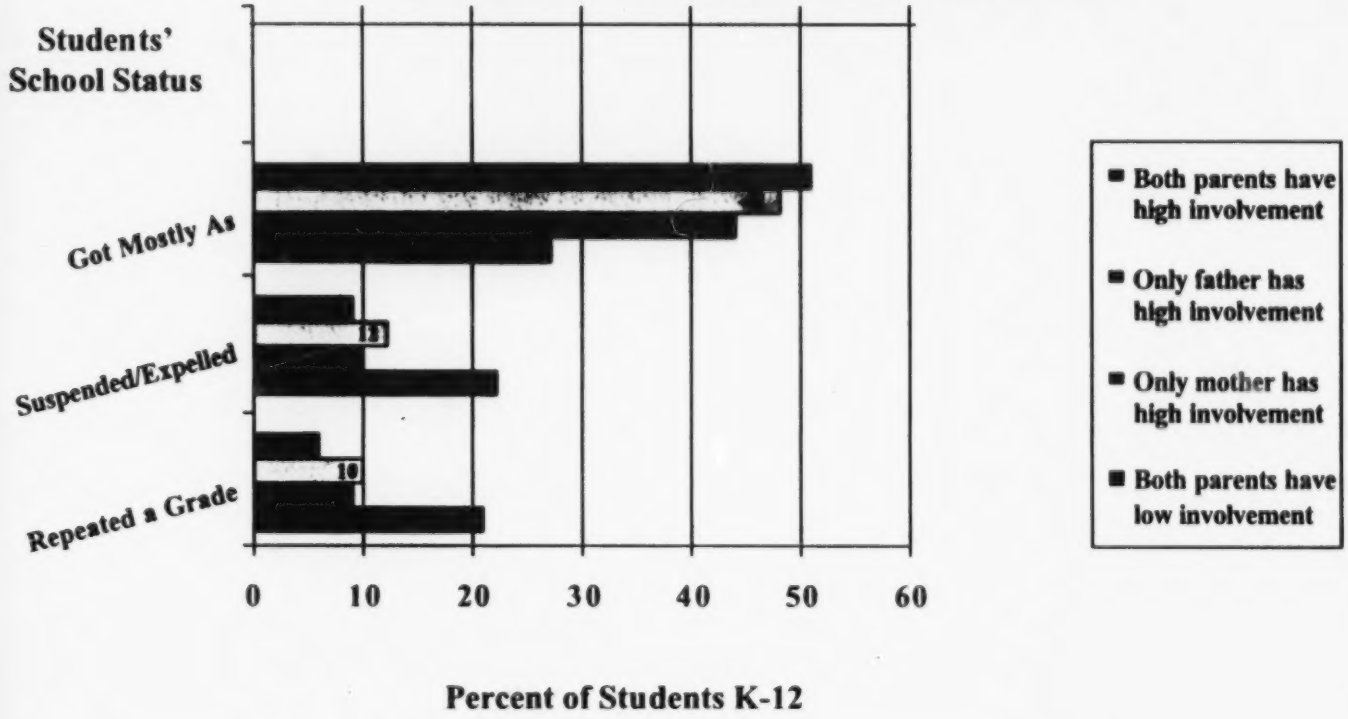
- Improved teacher morale
- Higher ratings of teachers by parents
- More support from families
- Better reputations in the community

PARTNERSHIP for Family Involvement in Education

RESEARCH

Family Involvement and Student Achievement Among Two-Parent Families

Importance of Parents' Involvement to Student Success in School

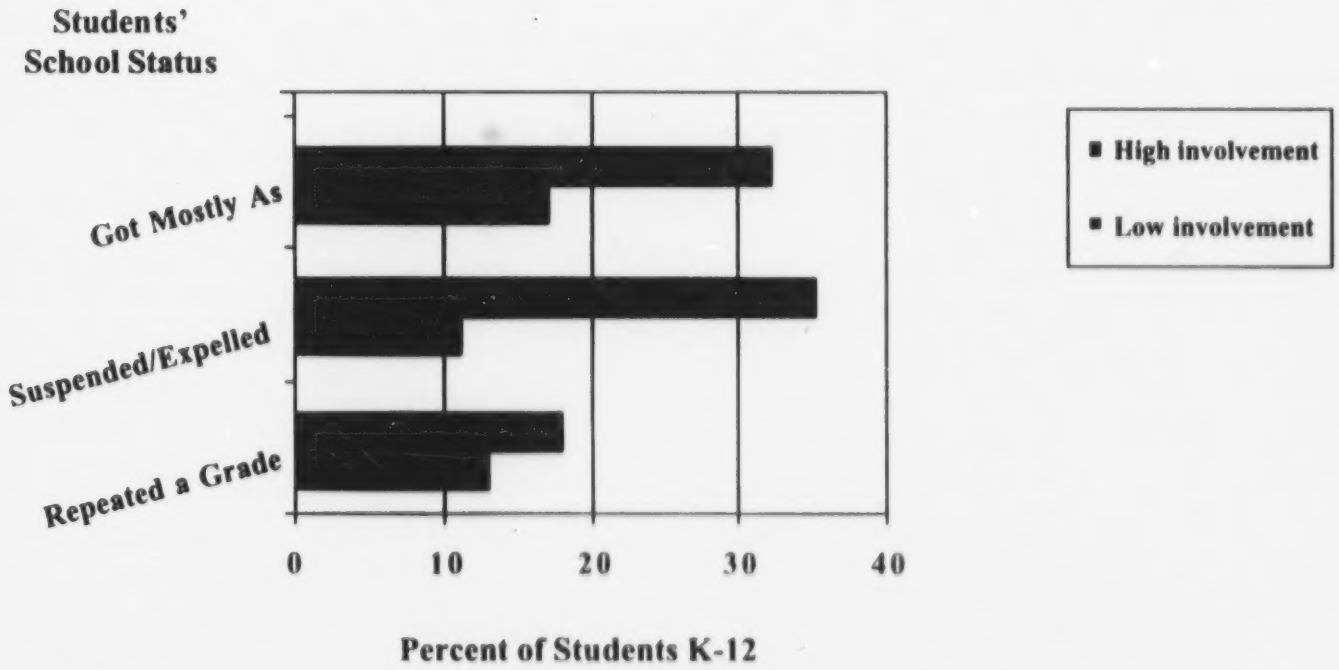


PARTNERSHIP for Family Involvement in Education

RESEARCH

Single Fathers' Involvement and Student Achievement

Importance of Fathers' Involvement to Student Success in School

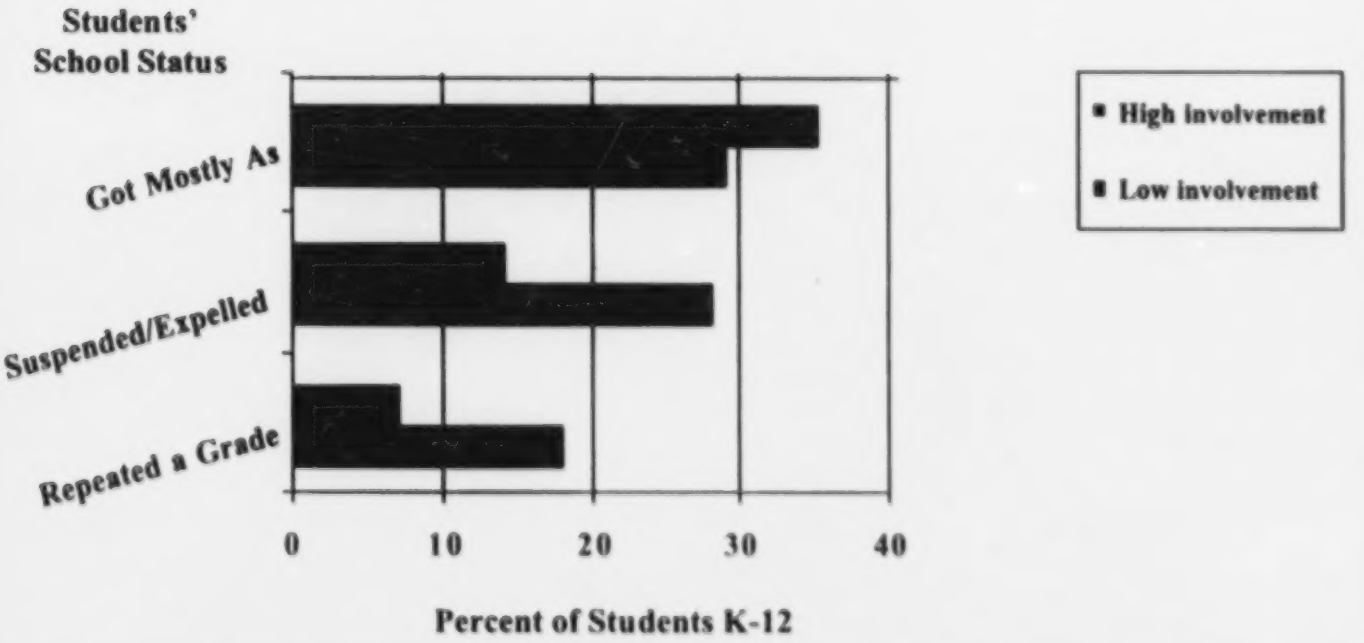


PARTNERSHIP for Family Involvement in Education

RESEARCH

Non-Resident Fathers' Involvement and Student Achievement

Importance of Fathers' Involvement to Student Success in School

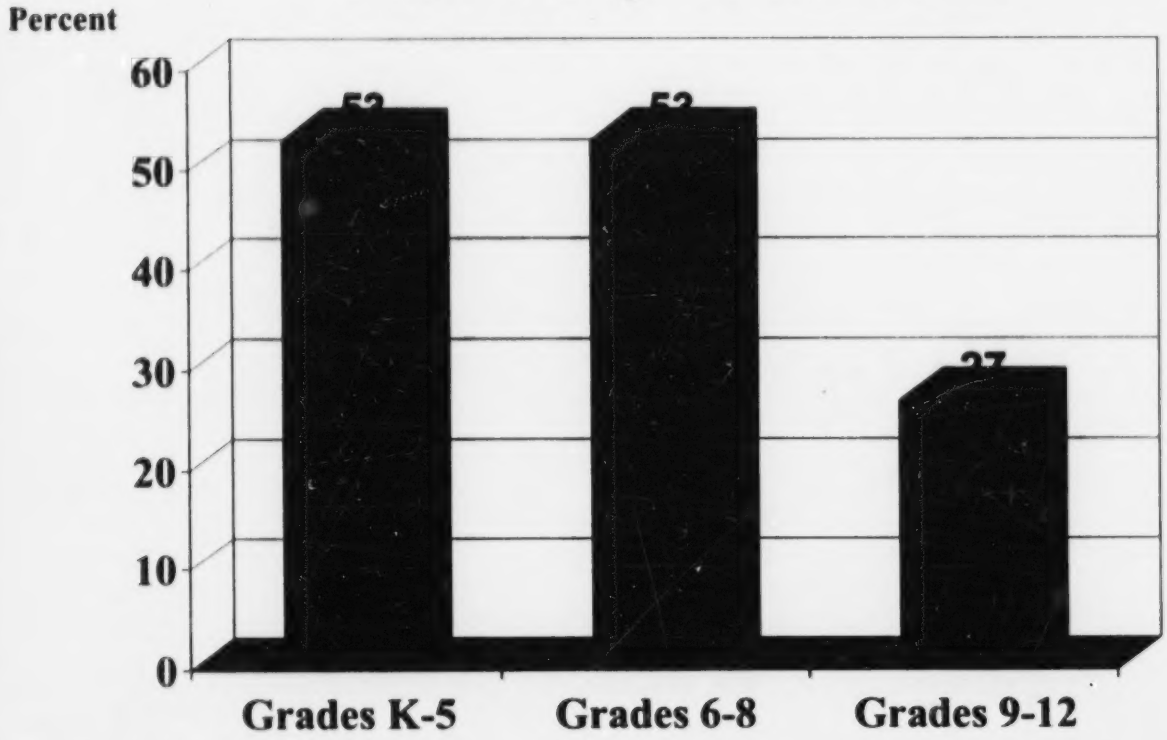


PARTNERSHIP for Family Involvement in Education

RESEARCH

Involvement of Single Fathers in Their Children's Education Across Grade Levels

Percent of Children with Highly Involved Fathers, by Grade Level



PARTNERSHIP for Family Involvement in Education

OPINION

What People Say About Fathers' Involvement

A full 96 percent of adults believe that fathers need to be more involved in their children's education.

Source: National Center for Fathering
Gallup Poll, 1992.

PARTNERSHIP for Family Involvement in Education

OPINION

What Students Say About Fathers' and Mothers' Involvement

About 70 percent of teens say their mothers are involved in what happens to them at school. Only 62 percent say their fathers are involved in what happens to them at school.

Source: NCES, 1997

PARTNERSHIP for Family Involvement in Education

OPINION

What Teachers Say About Fathers' and Mothers' Involvement

Teachers say that the "single most important thing public schools need in order to help students learn" is involved parents. Therefore, teachers and schools need to find ways to help families become involved.

Source: Henderson & Berla, 1994

Ways to Improve Family Involvement in Education

- Overcome time and resource constraints.
- Provide information and training to parents and school staff.
- Restructure schools to support family involvement.
- Bridge school-family differences.
- Tap external supports for partnerships.

PARTNERSHIP for Family Involvement in Education

How Fathers Can Get Involved with their Children at Home

- Read to their children.
- Discuss the day's events with their children.
- Help their children with homework and special projects.
- Limit television viewing time.
- Watch TV with their children and talk about program messages.

PARTNERSHIP for Family Involvement in Education

How Schools Can Involve Fathers

- **Make a special effort to include fathers in:**
  - parent/teacher conferences,
  - after-school and extracurricular activities,
  - mentoring and tutoring activities.
- **Keep fathers informed of their children's progress and performance through ongoing contact, including newsletters, conferences, and telephone calls.**

PARTNERSHIP for Family Involvement in Education

Parent/Family Involvement Practices

The National PTA Standards for Parent/ Family Involvement Programs

- **Communicating**—Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.
- **Parenting**—Parenting skills are promoted and supported.
- **Student Learning**— Parents play an integral role in helping students learn.
- **Volunteering**—Parents are welcome in the school and their support and assistance are sought.
- **School Decision-Making and Advocacy**—Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
- **Collaborating with the Community**—Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.

PARTNERSHIP for Family Involvement in Education

Information on Fathers' Involvement

Call 1-800-USA-LEARN or visit:

- www.pfie.ed.gov
- http://fatherhood.hhs.gov/
- www.nces.ed.gov/pubs98/fathers/index.html
- www.igc.org/fatherhood/
- www.4fathers.com
- www.fathers.com
- www.fatherhood.org/index.html